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ORIGINAL PAPERS.

STATESMEN—THEIR RARENESS AND IMPORTANCE.

DANIEL WEBSTER. *By Joseph Story*

ONE of the first reflections, which occurs to an intelligent observer of the actual political condition of the United States, is, that we have few, very few statesmen. We have party men and party leaders in abundance; we have politicians of all sorts and kinds, who make a trade and pleasure of the vocation; and we have demagogues of every rank and degree, from those who guide, direct, and control the political arrangements of a city, down to those, who become the humble echoes of their masters at the village inn, or the village post-office, near the cross-roads. We are a most busy, inquisitive, and, one might almost say, meddlesome people in all public affairs, state and national, public and municipal. We discuss them; we form opinions; we vote in masses at the polls; we insist upon a voice in all matters; and we are quick to act, and slow to doubt upon any measure, which concerns the Republic. Many are eager for office; few, comparatively speaking, decline it; and, in the course of a moderately long life, multitudes are called to political offices and duties. 6812

This is all very natural, nay, almost unavoidable, considering the popular character of all our institutions. The people are entrusted with all the leading powers of legislation and government. They frame their constitutions; appoint their rulers; select their representatives, and through them carry on the whole business of government, from that of the smallest municipality to that of the whole nation. It is, therefore, not only wise, but it is necessary, that they should bestow much time upon public men and public measures, and inquire into, and sift the tendency of all, that is done, and all that is said. Under such circumstances it might well be supposed, that we should have, in

every part of the land, crowds of men deeply versed in public affairs. And yet one of the most lamentable truths, which meets us on every side, as we turn, is, that we have had, for many years past, but few statesmen. By statesmen, I do not, of course, mean men, who can speak fluently, or even eloquently, in the occasional debates in Congress, and in the state legislatures. There is certainly no lack of these, as our long debates and over-loaded presses abundantly establish. Indeed, it is probably true, (as has been often asserted) that no people exceed the Americans in facility and exuberance of speech; and no people use this facility and exuberance upon more public occasions, from the stump orator, at home, to the representative in the national legislature. But by statesmen I mean men, who have profoundly studied the nature, science, and operations of governments in general; men, who intimately understand our relations with foreign states and foreign policy; men, who have taken a large survey of all our national interests, agricultural, manufacturing, commercial, political; men, who have not only acquired some knowledge of the theory of statistics and political economy, but who have had a thorough experience in public business and public measures; men, in short, who may safely be entrusted with public affairs, because they have high talents and solid acquirements, and unite with these a liberal spirit, a thorough acquaintance with the details, as well as with the principles of government, and a lofty ambition, as well as an honest purpose, to serve their country, and to give permanence to its institutions and interests. Such men, and no other men, are entitled to the character of statesmen.

Of such men no country on earth has so much need as our own. In despotic governments, where all power is concentrated in a single sovereign, such men are of occasional use, when important changes in policy are contemplated, or great emergencies call for extraordinary resources and arrangements. But, in the common course of things, in such governments, few innovations are proposed or sanctioned. The stream of public policy moves on within its old and accustomed banks, sluggishly or rapidly, according to the times and the seasons. But the embankments are sufficient for either; or if there be an occasional inundation, it does little more than create a temporary and silent sympathy for the sufferers; and then all moves on again as before. In a limited monarchy, such, for instance, as the government of Great-Britain, there is great use for statesmen; and, it may be added, that great use is made of them. In former times, indeed, court favorites and court cabinets, "the power, behind the throne, greater than the throne itself," could do much. But, even then, in perilous times, there

was always need of pilots, who could weather the storm; and, if they could not be purchased upon the ordinary terms of court favor and patronage, the crown was compelled to take them upon their own terms. And, in our day, they have become indispensable parts of the public machinery. If war is to be declared, or peace is to be concluded; if there is to be a reform in Parliament, or in the law, or in the revenue, or in foreign policy; statesmen must lead the crown, and not the crown lead statesmen. The rights of the people must be guarded and maintained; and they must feel themselves to be fully represented in the House of Commons. The members of the latter will not now suffer themselves to be dragooned into measures at the mere beck of the crown. They require reasons, and satisfactory reasons, from ministers, who are statesmen; and they scruple not to advise the crown to dismiss ministers, when they are incompetent, or they do not possess the confidence of the nation. And, what to Americans may sound strange, the crown listens to the advice. The interests of the whole nation are not to be sacrificed to the wishes or passions of the king and his courtiers. They, who hold the purse, will regulate the sword, and the patronage, and the measures of the government. Earl Grey and Lord Brougham (who are now veterans in the public service) are as necessary to William IV. as Mr. Canning, and Lord Castlereagh, and the Duke of Wellington were to George IV. in the main purposes of carrying on the government of the empire.

What is true in the limited monarchy of England, as to the necessity of statesmen, is far more true of a republic. There, they are indispensable to carry on only a portion of the machinery. Here, they must guide and manage the whole. There, the people are a part only of the government. Here, the people are the whole, or rather control the whole. There, with some impulses from the people, through the House of Commons, the king can keep every thing in its own place. Here, every thing that is done, daily, nay, hourly, for better or for worse, must be done by the people through their chosen agents. There is, therefore, a perpetual necessity for watchfulness, intelligence, activity, public spirit, and, though last, not least, of integrity and virtue to keep the country in the track of its true interests. Folly or ignorance, rashness or recklessness, the pride of power or the corruptions of office, may endanger our rights and liberties, and cut us adrift from all that is safe and suitable to our condition.

Besides these general considerations, there are others peculiar to us, calling for various and extraordinary abilities in our statesmen. Our form of government, however excellent and admirable in its structure, is confessedly new. It is a great experiment in the history of nations.

Its success will cover us with glory, as well as secure us in happiness; its failure will spread a gloom over the human race, as well as involve our own ruin. In such a state of things, all the sagacity, experience, coolness, and prudence, belonging to the wisest and best heads, are indispensable to us. We have our all at risk in the voyage without insurance; and we must always keep on board the ship of state, not only a competent crew to work the ship, but the most cautious of the skillful, as well as the truest of the best, to keep her in good trim, and secure her from shipwreck on the new coasts of the ocean, which we traverse without experienced pilots, upon a voyage partly of discovery, and partly of profit.

We have a most complicated government, composed of different sovereignties, in many respects independent; connected with, and to a limited extent controlled by, a national sovereignty. The boundaries between the powers of the states and those of the nation are undefined; and, perhaps, in some degree, must forever remain undefinable; for they almost necessarily run into each other. The lights and the shades are infinitely blended, and the dividing points between them are evanescent. No administration on earth is called to the performance of so many delicate duties, where there are so many diversities of interests, of institutions, of employments, of feelings, of local jealousies and attachments, and of sincere and irrepressible differences of opinion. No where are there so many occasions for mutual sacrifices of opinion, for enlarged notions of public policy, and for a wise and moderate course of general legislation.

That, under such circumstances, we should have comparatively few statesmen, is a seeming paradox, since occasions so constantly arise, in which their importance and usefulness must be severely felt. It seems a contradiction of the well-known doctrine in political economy, that the supply should not always be proportional to the demand, or rather that they should not reciprocally produce each other. But the truth is, that it is, when thoroughly examined, rather an illustration of, than an exception to, the doctrine. The demand, in order to create the supply, must be general, not local; it must be uniform, not casual; it must be permanent, and not merely temporary and capricious. It must justify, if one may so say, the outlay of time and capital, and bring sure returns, if they are distant, and the growth is slow, and the arrangements previously required are extensive.

Now, in the first place, it needs scarcely be said, that statesmen are not the growth of a day, or of a year, or even of several years. There must be a rare combination of eminent qualifications, genius, judgment, extensive knowledge, various experience, a devoted industry,

and even an enthusiasm for public affairs. There must be honesty and disinterestedness of purpose, a purified ambition, great firmness, and, at the same time, great flexibility of mind. And, above all, there must be a long and severe training in public life, an intimate familiarity with its various duties, and a ready tact in seizing upon all the proprieties of the occasion to get rid of dangerous and critical excitements, and to forward wise measures, without shocking popular prejudices. A statesman must, in some measure, be master of the past, present, and future. He must see what is behind, as well as before. He must learn to separate the accidental in human experience, from that which constitutes the cause or the effect of measures. He must legislate for the future, when it is, as yet, but dimly seen; and he must put aside much, which might now win popular favor, in order to found systems of solid utility, whose results will require ages clearly to develop; but still, whose results are indispensable for the safety, the glory, and the happiness of the country. It has been said, that confidence is a plant of a slow growth; but it may be said, with still more truth, that statesmanship is a plant of the slowest growth. It requires a hardy and vigorous soil, and it must stand many a tempest of icy coldness, and of blasting heat. How few, then, can afford to take such risks, to encounter such chances, to submit to such discipline, and to expend life in pursuits, which, after all, may yield nothing but disappointment? Have republics, in ancient or modern times, been renowned for their constancy and affection towards patriots? Has Athens been alone tired of hearing Aristides called the just, or Demosthenes the eloquent, or Socrates the wise, or Aristotle the great?

In the next place, it is a common, though most mischievous error, that a popular government does not require even high, much less the highest talents to administer it. And in no country has this notion been more extensively believed and acted upon than in America. The people here have been so long and so often told, that they could never mean wrong, and, therefore, could never act wrong, that they were too wise not to choose competent rulers, and too watchful ever to be betrayed or injured by them, that to doubt their infallibility in choice or in judgement is, in the present times, no ready passport to popular favor. Nothing is more familiar now, than the remark, that there is no mystery in our government. That all lies clear and on the surface. That honesty of purpose, and reasonable intelligence, will secure the just operations of all our public institutions. That the machinery of our constitution has been so well constructed and so skillfully arranged, that it will go on steadily with very little help; and that the most we want

is the attention of industrious minds to repair small breaches, and put oil on the friction wheels. Nay, this is turned into a matter of public boast; and it is boldly asserted, that it is a proof of the weakness and mal-adaptation of any government, that high talents and long experience are required to administer it. Few persons have visited Washington, of late years, who have not heard very audible declarations of this sort in the rank and file of parties; and, even nearer home, it is no bad topic for a college declamation, or a speech at the hustings.

In the next place, in all popular governments, and especially in one like our own, a confederated republic, there is always a very numerous body of men, who, from various causes, are ever on the alert for office, or for popular favor. Some desire it from super-abundance of leisure; some from the desire of profit, and a distressing poverty of means; some from a stirring and ill-directed ambition; some from the pride of consequence; and not, to enumerate more, some from the solid power of patronage, which it confers or exhausts. Now, it cannot be disguised, that with such hosts in the field, the highest candidates in the race have little chance of success, and find obstructions on every side, from rivals or enemies, from the arts they disdain to practise, or the pretensions they decline to put forth. The real statesman is willing to win public favor only by fair means; by high character, inflexible virtue, fixed principles, and a liberal and enlightened policy. He is conscious of his own humiliation and dishonor, when he rises by subterfuges and intrigues. But the demagogue, like the courtier, can unscrupulously employ all means, which subserve his main purpose. He looks steadily to the end. The triumph is to be secured; fairly, if it may, but at all events it must be secured. In such a contest, with such unequal means of influence, what chance is there of success for those, who are best qualified for public honors? They know their fate, and they often withdraw from the canvass.

And, not to dwell upon many other grounds, in the rear of these causes comes the overwhelming spirit of party, which substitutes devotion to the party for the good of the country; and which neither acknowledges, nor respects any candidates but those, who are found close wedged in its own ranks. Such combinations are the natural growth of all free governments. They are founded in the very nature of man. They are the most facile means to gain and to perpetuate power without merit, in the same hands. They rally under their standard, all the ambitious, and restless, and disaffected, who have encountered disappointment, or insist on public office, as well as ready materials of many other sorts. The few are thus enabled, gradually, but irresistibly, to secure to themselves the monopoly of public office

and patronage ; and the many are drilled in the ranks with the privilege to vote for those, who have already been selected for them, and with a certainty of political denouncement, if they dare to doubt, much less to act, in opposition to the voice of the party. If the party constitutes, at the moment, the majority of the state or nation, it assumes the imposing name of “the People,” and all its acts are the acts of the people. If, unluckily, it should sink into a minority, it is compelled to submit to the less grateful appellation of being “a faction.”

How far this has been, or is likely, hereafter, to be true, in our country, it is unnecessary to say. It is a dangerous topic for comment or examination. *Incedimus per ignes suppositos cineri doloso.* But it will be easy to see, that in the same proportion, that party spirit obtains a predominance in any free government, and secures its own steady triumph, just in the same proportion it will suppress or dispense with the services of statesmen. If it needs them, it will unwillingly grudge the proper reward ; and it can scarcely secure them long without bringing the favored man down to its own level, or surrendering its own sovereignty. The latter must be a moral miracle. The former has but too often proved a melancholy truth, “to point a moral, or adorn a tale.”

But it may be asked, for what purpose are these reflections made, and to what object do they tend ? They are made to excite my countrymen to the importance and value of rearing and perpetuating a large class of statesmen,—real, pure, effective statesmen. If our republic falls, it will, probably, fall from a general imbecility, brought on by its powers being entrusted to incompetent rulers, or being wielded by corrupt ones. We have no permanent rewards to bestow upon statesmen for their services. They cannot become the founders of great families, or the possessors of hereditary rank. It is wise, that it should be so. But we can promote them to public honors, when they deserve them ; we can cheer them for their labors and their sacrifices ; we can protect their reputations from unjust censure ; we can exercise a generous candor in scanning their actions ; we can evince towards them a lively gratitude ; we can bear them on our lips while living ; we can embalm their memories when dead, if not in costly monuments, at least in our affections and our public records. These are rewards best suited to elevated minds ; and they have been those, which patriots in all ages have been most solicitous to acquire and to hold.

I have been led to these remarks, however, not so much by any general views of the subject, as by the immediate contemplation of the character and services of a great statesman now living. I mean

DANIEL WEBSTER. I do not propose to write his life, or his eulogy; that duty will belong to abler hands, at some future day, after he shall have passed from the present scenes of action, and shall have become the appropriate theme of the historians of his country. Nor do I propose to sketch his biography, or his rise and progress from the comparative obscurity of private life, to the wide circle of his present fame. That has been already done, so far as it may now be fitly done, by one of the ripest scholars of the age, and in a manner which cannot be surpassed. What I propose is, rather to bring before my countrymen a slight sketch of some of the prominent features of his political life, as an incitement and admonition to the young and ambitious, and a consolation and hope to the old and the contemplative.

Mr. Webster is now about fifty-two years of age; and his first entrance into public life was about twenty-two years ago, as a Representative in Congress from New-Hampshire, the state in which he was born, and received his education, and of which he is, and has long been, one of the proudest ornaments. Whether the state has duly appreciated or thoroughly felt the full value of such a distinction, is a matter, which her own citizens must decide for themselves, and constitutes no point for examination in the present remarks.

At the age of thirty, in a most trying and critical period, just after the commencement of the late war with Great-Britain, Mr. Webster came into the public councils. With the exception of a few intervals he has ever since been engaged in public affairs. His reputation, therefore, such as it is, is not of a mushroom growth, the sudden production of the hot-bed heats of popular favor, or the stunted and unhealthy upstart of the way-side. He has had a large survey of public cares and public duties, in times of war and of peace, in minorities and majorities, as a leader with, and as a leader against, administrations. His political studies have been nourished and matured by the lucubrations and practice of more than twenty years, a period assigned by the great masters in his own profession, as that fit for a lawyer, who seeks and would secure eminence. How he has borne himself through all these various scenes, is matter, not merely of curiosity, but of intense interest. Has he been consistent? Has he been firm and frank? Has he been true to his friends and his principles? Has he been true to his country and its institutions? Has he been devoted to the mere objects of party, or to sectional and local interests? Or has he,—as public duty required,—represented the nation, and maintained the integrity of its interests at home and abroad? Has he been the advocate of a broad and comprehensive

policy, fit for the North and the South, the East and the West? Or has he contented himself with patronizing and enforcing the exclusive claims of his own state, or district; or narrowed himself down to the more facile and familiar ambition of less gifted minds,—the support of mere private claims and private projects,—as if he were the retained counsel of his constituents? In short, has he been the ready and staunch advocate of national measures, national rights, constitutional principles, and liberal systems? Or the flexible supporter of every project, enjoying a temporary popularity, and fluttering for its hour in the sunshine of executive patronage? These are questions, which naturally occur with reference to the characters of all public men; and they acquire extraordinary importance in estimating the merits of statesmen.

Consistency is, doubtless, a quality of no inconsiderable value, as a test of character, and often rises into a high virtue. He, who is ever veering about with every wind of doctrine and opinion, is possessed of feeble judgement, or feeble principles, or both. He wants constancy or clearness of mind, and may often be open to the stronger reproach of a deficiency of morals. As a guide or an example, he is equally unsafe; and it is difficult to say, whether he does most injury as a friend or a foe, as a supporter or as an opponent of government. But consistency of character and consistency of opinion are not necessarily identical. Never to change an opinion, would be as remarkable, nay, as unworthy, in a wise man, as never to be stable in any opinion. Inflexibility in maintaining opinions once taken up, whatever may be the change of circumstances, and without regard to them, degenerates into mischievous obstinacy and wrong-headed perseverance. It would be strange, if a man should never profit by his own experience, or by that of others; that he should learn nothing, and forget nothing; that, at twenty, he should be as ripe and correct as at forty. And, to bring the case home, that when he begins political life, he should be so wise, that there should be nothing to learn, and that, in the most complex and difficult of all human transactions, the constant permutations and new combinations of society should introduce no new elements of opinion or action. The statement of such a case carries its own refutation along with it. Human wisdom is the aggregate of all human experience, constantly accumulating, and selecting, and re-organizing its own materials.

It would be little praise to Mr. Webster to say, that he has always entertained the same opinions upon all political subjects. Like other great minds of his own and former times, like Burke, and Pitt, and Fox, and Wellington, and Canning, he has, doubtless, modified some,

and changed other opinions. But this change has been the result, not of accident, or interest, but of enlarged knowledge and comprehensive genius acting upon ample means of study and practice. It has been a slow and silent growth, and, therefore, vigorous and solid. It has gradually mixed in with the great principles upon which he began life, and has not superseded them. The friends to whom he was attached in his youth have never deserted him, nor he them. He may have differed from them on many occasions; but it has been a difference, which created no hostility and lost no confidence. It was merely the exercise of that candid judgement, which claims the right to decide for itself, and freely concedes the same right to others. Perhaps few men, in so long a career, in so critical a period, have ever maintained so general a consistency of opinion. None, certainly, have maintained more consistency of character. If the cause of all this be sought, it will be found in the peculiar characteristics of Mr. Webster's mind. It is marked by sagacity, caution, accuracy, foresight, comprehensiveness, laborious research, and untiring meditation, as well as by various genius. In short, he possesses that undefinable quality, called *WISDOM*, in an eminent degree, the joint result of the original texture of his mind, and its severe use and discipline in accurate observations of public affairs.

Let us look a little more closely into his political life, and see if it does not justify these remarks. He came into public life during a period, when his country was at war; and he was chosen as an opponent of the then administration, and as an advocate for peace with Great-Britain. Did he launch into an indiscriminate hostility to the government? Did he support the claims of Great-Britain and repudiate our own? No. He was ready to give his aid for all public measures, useful, and, in his judgement, effective, to carry on the war and to secure peace. He was against land hostilities, upon the Canadian frontiers, as at once perilous and exhausting. But he was for some defence throughout the land, and for active warfare, where it might be formidable, upon the ocean. He was for a navy to protect us at home, and to carry on retaliatory operations upon the most vulnerable points of our enemy, her commerce and shipping. The main object of the administration seemed to be to maintain the warfare on land. He held it the truest policy to wage it at sea. Was he wrong? Will any man now coolly say, that this was not the best and the safest course? Is it not now a fact in history, which could then only be conjectured, that Great-Britain was mainly pressed to peace by our successful depredations upon her commerce in every sea? Premiums rose, at Lloyd's Coffee-House, from five per cent. to thirty-three per

cent. on maritime risks; and the merchants and ship-owners, who were most clamorous for war in England, became anxious for peace.

The American administration were exceedingly distressed for revenue, the very sinews of war. The credit of the government was sunk to the lowest ebb; its own paper currency and treasury notes, payable in one year, with a fair interest, encountered the enormous depreciation of *fifty* per cent. Under such circumstances, a resort to a national bank seemed indispensable to save the government from bankruptcy. It was, accordingly, proposed by the friends of the administration. Mr. Webster, on that occasion, acted with the patriotic spirit, which a regard to the public welfare demanded, and without reference to party. The bank, proposed by the government, was with a capital of fifty millions, nine-tenths of which was to be depreciated paper of the government itself. To such a moneyed institution, on such a basis, Mr. Webster was opposed, because it would essentially aggravate all the evils of a *paper* currency, and would render a return to specie payments, then suspended by many of the state banks, absolutely impracticable. But he avowed himself the firm friend of a national bank, both as constitutional and expedient, nay, as indispensable to the operations of the government. And he pledged himself to support a proper national bank, which should be brought forward upon a money basis, and gave the outline of a plan in proof of his sincerity. That plan, upon the defeat of the paper bank scheme, was brought forward by the friends of the administration, and was steadily and successfully supported by Mr. Webster. It passed both Houses of Congress, and failed afterwards solely by the negative of the then President. In this respect, he followed out the doctrine, which, in a speech made but a short time before, he avowed as his leading principle of action. "The humble aid (said he) which it would be in my power to render to measures of government, shall be given cheerfully, if government will pursue measures, which I can conscientiously support." Peace soon followed, and with it the project of a national bank was for a time laid aside. When, however, it was again revived in 1816, Mr. Webster adhered to his former doctrines; but the plan, containing some features, especially as to the appointment of government directors,—a measure most questionable in its use, as well as in its abuse,—which he disapproved, he refused to give it his support. But as soon as it became a law, he took every measure to give it efficiency and strength, so that it might afford a solid and secure currency to the whole country. He, therefore, brought forward a resolution requiring all duties and revenues, payable to the government, to be paid in specie, or in the notes of

banks, whose paper was equal to and convertible into specie. At this time the depreciation of the bank paper of the state banks, which had suspended specie payments, was enormous. The paper of the banks in New-York was about eighteen per cent. below par; that of the banks of Philadelphia about twenty per cent.; that of the banks of Baltimore about twenty-five per cent. In New-England, there had been no suspension of specie payments; and the consequence was, that duties and revenues, collected in Massachusetts, were twenty-five per cent. higher than in Baltimore, where the local depreciated currency was received at par. This was a flagrant breach of the constitution, in its just spirit; for that required all duties to be uniform, and without preference of states. But in this manner the most important advantages were given to the ports of those states, where the depreciation was greatest. The resolution of Mr. Webster passed; and to that resolution, and the existence of a national bank, we are indebted for the sound, uniform, and excellent currency, which has ever since pervaded the whole country.

Soon after this period Mr. Webster removed to Boston, and for a time retired from the public councils, devoting himself to the arduous duties of his profession. It is not my design to enter upon this subject, or to speak of his distinguished services at the bar, various and interesting as they have been, which have long since placed him among the first, if not the very first in the country. If he is not before all others, it may truly be said, that he is not behind any one in forensic powers and fame, in the general estimation of the profession.

When Mr. Webster again resumed public life, about the year 1823, other duties and other measures of great magnitude agitated the public councils. Among other topics of great interest was that of the arrangements of the Tariff, a subject, which has since become the foundation of some of the most heated controversies in Congress, known to our public annals. Upon this subject, it has often been suggested, that the opinions of Mr. Webster have undergone some modifications. It is, probably, true, that they have so. But these modifications are far less extensive, than is commonly, though erroneously supposed. They are modifications of opinion, connected with and derived from essential changes, not only in our foreign and domestic policy, but in the commercial and political policy and intercourse of the whole world. A statesman, who should disregard such changes, and omit to provide for them, who should refuse to adopt measures to prevent foreign inequalities, or the sacrifices of domestic interests, from an obstinate adherence to theory, or to measures,

which had ceased to be practicable, or if practicable, were constantly working mischievous results, would be unworthy of the name. He would be a bigot, and not a patriot; not "too fond of the right, to pursue the expedient;" but too indifferent to human sufferings to make any effort to redress them, or too wise in his own conceit to gather wisdom from general experience. Such a man would suffer a city to be inundated by a ruinous flood, rather than have an embankment of his own construction doubted in its sufficiency. When, at an earlier period, Congress were pressed to give a preternatural energy and encouragement to domestic manufactures, to the apparent injury of our commerce, then just recovering from the heavy blows inflicted on it by the war with Great-Britain, Mr. Webster, though a decided friend to manufactures and agriculture, as well as to commerce, was unwilling to try the experiment at such a time, and under such circumstances. All Europe had then ceased to be belligerent, and was struggling in an uncompromising rivalry with our crippled commerce. He thought that manufactures, under the existing state of things, would rise as fast as they could be permanently sustained; that a quick growth might be mischievous to their ultimate prosperity; and at all events, that any sudden change of policy afterwards might involve them in sudden ruin; a change, in a government like ours, always to be feared, and always to be provided against. Who, looking to all the intervening difficulties, which have since arisen, can say, that there was not much of political foresight and sagacity in all this? At that time, Mr. Webster shared the opinion in common with many of the ablest and best statesmen in the country.

But the system was adopted. Immense capital was embarked in manufactures; and new embarrassments arose from foreign competition, to an extent which no one had previously imagined could possibly exist. Mr. Webster then acted as a statesman should act. He determined to sustain the interests, which had been thus created by the public patronage. He would not consent to destroy, what Congress had pledged itself to support. His object was to give relief where it was needed, and to frame a tariff upon principles adapted to our necessities, our interests, and our permanent pursuits. That he did not accomplish all that he desired, is true. But whoever reads his printed speeches upon this subject, will find them full of profound reasoning, and accurate knowledge of political economy. Indeed, one of the peculiarities of Mr. Webster's character is, that he draws practical materials freely from all other minds and sources, to give more clearness and certainty to the operations of his own thoughts. Guided by the results of the same enlightened experience, he is now known

as one of the firmest and most active friends of the domestic system, as one embedded in the vital interests of the country.

It was about this period, while in the House of Representatives, that Mr. Webster performed one of the most meritorious and valuable labors of his life, a labor, which few can duly appreciate, because it carries with it no general applause ; but it, at the same time, deserves the highest praise, from the unostentatious and silent good, which it confers upon the whole community. I speak of his revision of the criminal code of the United States, which makes provision for the numerous defects and omissions, which must be found in a code made in the year 1790, in the infancy of the national government, and left, without any substantial amendments, until the year 1825. The amendatory act of 1825, which was carried through Congress by his steady and manly devotion to it, though it consists of twenty-six sections, is but a part of the plan which he had sketched of a criminal code. But it contains all, which he then thought could be obtained, without putting at risk the success of the whole revision. In truth, so little interest do the members of Congress feel in mere civil or criminal legislation, applicable to judicial tribunals, that the very circumstance, that any proposed system is comprehensive and full, ordinarily furnishes a fatal obstacle to its passage. It requires too much time to examine ; it catches no popular feelings ; it engages no ardent supporters. It is a matter of dry duty, to be postponed to some more convenient season, which never does and never can arrive. To many persons, who may read these pages, it will, probably, be new, that the thing has been done at all, much more, that it has been done by Mr. Webster. Yet it may be told them truly, that their persons, and property, and rights on the broad ocean, as well as on land, are rendered far more secure than they were before, by his untiring industry. He, who has so often and so eloquently defended the rights of the government and the people, in the halls of legislation, has performed not less important duties in the committee room, in maturing measures, and collecting facts, and suggesting inquiries.

But the field of Mr. Webster's labors, in which his great talents are best known, and have been most successful, are, beyond all question, the struggles he has maintained, at all times, for the constitution in its true, broad, and genuine spirit. On all occasions, he has stood forth, through evil report and good report, its champion and its friend. He has never approved any other exposition than its own text, read by the lights of common sense and historical illustrations. He has had no ingenious theories to support, no paradoxes to display, no local glosses to interpret, and no little expedients to expand or contract it

according to the interests of party. As he read it, when he first came into public life, so he reads it now, with those more comprehensive means of exposition only, which a more intense study and a profound reverence for it naturally produce in great minds. He is not among those, who seek to enlarge its text beyond its fair import. Neither will he consent to cripple it, by stripping it of powers clearly defined, or necessarily implied. In these doctrines, Mr. Webster has been uniform and inflexible, at all times and in all places. Take him, for instance, in the forum, in one of his earliest and proudest efforts, the Dartmouth College case, or in the National Bank case, or in the Steam-boat Monopoly case ; or take him in the Senate, in his magnificent speeches in answer to Col. Hayne, or in support of the Force Bill,—as it is called ; or in any of his later struggles, still fresh in our memories, upon great constitutional controversies. Every where, you will find the same principles of exposition, the same luminous course of reasoning, the same compact and irresistible logic, the same commanding eloquence and energy of expression. His thoughts and opinions upon the constitution run in the same channel with those of its great authors and earliest interpreters. He belongs to the school of Washington, and Jay, and Hamilton, and Madison, and Marshall. He argues, like one in earnest, and determined to maintain constitutional powers and duties ; he defends, like one, who believes the constitution to be the last refuge and hope of our political liberty ; and he places himself in the breach, to meet every attack, and to surrender nothing to party assaults from without, or to discontented murmurs from within. It may be affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that in the general estimate of his countrymen, as a constitutional lawyer and statesman, he has no compeer in the present day, save only the excellent Chief Justice of the United States,—*clarum et venerabile nomen*. To him, if one may so say, Mr. Webster seems silently to appeal in all his constitutional arguments, as one able to comprehend and analyze them, and with a consciousness, that what he asserts, can scarcely fail to receive his decisive approbation.

But it is time to conclude these hasty and imperfect sketches. To Mr. Webster, for his public services, his country owes a debt of gratitude, which it cannot easily repay,—a debt of gratitude, not merely for what he has done ; but (what is little understood by the people at large,) for what he has silently or openly prevented from being done. Half the labors of a great statesman consist in silently averting public calamities, intentional or accidental ; the other half, though more attractive, as positive and active good, is scarcely more important or more permanently useful. To such a man, a public station is not

only a post of observation and responsibility, but also of enormous sacrifices of private ease and private interest. Who can estimate the loss of professional practice and emolument of Mr. Webster, acknowledgedly at the head of his profession, during his long attendance at Washington? If he should now retire, how could his place be adequately supplied? I hope, earnestly hope, for the honor of my country, nay, for its honest interests and permanent prosperity, that he may long remain in the public councils. But I will not disguise my conscientious opinion, that, in so doing, he puts at hazard some of the pecuniary inheritance due to his talents, and those solid consolations of property, which add to the dignity of old age a sense of personal independence, and a sweet and tranquilizing freedom from anxiety, which all men covet and few obtain. What motive can such a man have, with his hard-earned honors, now thick about him, to remain in Congress, but a strong sense of public duty, and a pure and exalted patriotism? No station can add substantially to his fame, though there is no station which would not be illustrated and sustained by his talents.

THE WORLD.

THOUGH this is called a world of care,
 To me a pleasant one it seems;
 Not only what I see is fair,
 But I have, even, goodly dreams.

Asleep, awake, such forms I see,
 As make me love it passing well;
 Now, is not that a noble tree?
 And is not this a charming dell?

That bird minute, which flutters round
 And dips its bill in every flower,—
 Has it the world a sad one found?
 Has it a sad, a heavy hour?

Up through the clustered leaves of green,
 Look out upon that silent sky;
 What clouds of glory there are seen,—
 A splendid pageant sweeping by.

Perhaps, when I am older grown,
 I shall be wise as others are;
 But I the lore would now disown,
 That shows the world less good and fair.

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